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Summary record of the 10th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 4 October 2023, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Marschik (Austria)
later: Ms. Monica (Vice-Chair)..... (Bangladesh)
later: Mr. Marschik (Chair)..... (Austria)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 25: Advancement of women (*continued*)
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(a) Advancement of women (*continued*) ([A/78/292](#))

(b) Implementation of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women and of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) ([A/78/206](#) and [A/78/216](#))

1. **Mr. Kattanga** (United Republic of Tanzania) said that the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action had yielded positive results for women and girls, especially in education. Women's access to paid employment was on the rise. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had been almost universally ratified. Women held 37 per cent of decision-making and leadership positions in Tanzania and led two out of three branches of government. Education for women and girls had also been ensured at all levels. Women had access to finance, including digital finance, and could secure interest-free loans in villages to improve their businesses.

2. Despite gains in addressing gender inequalities, challenges remained. For example, only a limited number of women and girls had secured a sound education; higher workloads, especially in unpaid domestic work, curtailed women's participation in income-generating activities; stereotypes that they could not be leaders persisted; and their economic capacity was limited owing to curbed access to land and other productive resources, election-related violence, inadequate sector-specific statistics disaggregated by sex and gender, underrepresentation in science, innovation and digital technologies, and underfunded support for women entrepreneurs.

3. Without decisive action, tens of millions of women would remain in poverty worldwide. Strong and visible leadership and commitment were necessary to drive forward the agenda for gender equality. His delegation reaffirmed the family as the fundamental unit of society and opposed changes to the definition of family. His delegation was also concerned that promoting access to safe abortion in the name of human rights would destroy the sanctity of family and life.

4. **Ms. Monica** (Bangladesh) said that her country had been committed to women's equality since its independence, as reflected in its Constitution. Through affirmative action and professional development, women held wide-ranging professional positions, served high up in the military and law enforcement, and

operated as peacekeepers. The Parliament Speaker, the Leader of the House, the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the House were all women. At least 33 per cent of the members of registered political parties were required to be women, and one third of seats in local government institutions must be filled by women.

5. Women contributed 34 per cent to her country's gross domestic product, with 3 million women working in the ready-made garments industry and many young women pursuing careers in information technology. To promote financial inclusion and decent work, her Government had rolled out mandatory paid maternity leave in the public sector, implemented a social safety net for vulnerable women and introduced gender-responsive budgeting.

6. Her delegation remained supportive of international initiatives for the advancement of women through United Nations bodies and resolutions on gender mainstreaming. Given that none of the Sustainable Development Goal 5 indicators had been met or almost met, further efforts were needed to reverse that trend, such as greater resource allocation, development support and cross-sectoral partnerships. With nearly 40 per cent of prime-age women excluded from the labour force and a concerning large wage gap, more investment in education, health and job creation was necessary, together with efforts to bridge the gender digital divide and create gender-responsive workplaces. Climate change could push millions of women and girls into poverty. In addition to gender-responsive climate actions, the women and peace and security agenda needed to be implemented to address that challenge.

7. **Mr. Zavala Porras** (Costa Rica) said that systemic and systematic gender-based violence affected the rights of women and girls worldwide. The international community should protect women and girls and close the gaps separating them from the full enjoyment of their human rights. A gender perspective mainstreamed across all national, regional and international agendas was necessary to leave no one behind. While his delegation appreciated the 131 resolutions with a gender perspective that had been adopted during the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, more needed to be done. The Secretariat, together with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), should systematically monitor the gender equality and mainstreaming mandates set by the Assembly in order to measure progress more effectively, increase accountability and strengthen the integration of the gender perspective within the Organization.

8. Global threats presented a disproportionately higher risk to women. The intersectional approach had shown that not all women were affected equally, with a heavier burden falling on migrant, Indigenous, poor and rural women. As champions of human rights, environmental sustainability and democratized power, women, adolescents and girls constituted an inexorable force that countries should support.

9. Since 2009, Costa Rica had included the principle of parity in the Electoral Code to combat systematic discrimination and violence against women and ensure their equal footing with men. His delegation supported gender parity at the United Nations and congratulated the Secretary-General on increasing the number of United Nations agencies that had reached parity from 5 in 2017 to 27 in 2023. However, within the Organization, women remained underrepresented in senior positions, gaps existed among Headquarters, field offices and specific missions, and obstacles stood in the way of women's professional development.

10. **Mr. Prabowo** (Indonesia) said that collective efforts to ensure the rights and well-being of women and girls had fallen short in Afghanistan owing to the restrictive edicts of the Taliban. Humanitarian aid was crucial to safeguarding the well-being and rights of Afghan women and girls, as their livelihoods and future had been jeopardized. Concerned about the lack of access of Afghan women and girls to education and to maternity and health services, Indonesia had spearheaded initiatives to meet their needs and called on the international community to rally together to advance their health and education.

11. Indonesia reaffirmed its dedication to freedom, justice and peace and emphasized the critical role played by women and girls in realizing those ideals. In December 2022, Indonesia and Qatar had organized an international conference on Afghan women's education, at which nearly \$1 billion in aid had been raised for the Afghan people. To ensure implementation on the ground, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Indonesia had met with special envoys on Afghanistan. Courage must be matched with action and politics set aside so that every woman and girl in Afghanistan and elsewhere could enjoy the rights, respect and opportunities they deserved.

12. **Mr. Valtýsson** (Iceland) said that countries were still far from achieving the full, equal and meaningful political participation of women, as evidenced by the fact that only 21 women had spoken on behalf of their Governments at the recent general debate of the General Assembly. Only 28 women served as Heads of State in the world, and women represented only one in four

members of parliaments worldwide; the number of female cabinet members was even lower.

13. Algorithms and artificial intelligence designed for and by men were bound to exacerbate inequality. New technology also opened fresh fronts in the battle against gender-based violence, which was increasingly creeping into new platforms. In all, two in five women had experienced technologically facilitated gender-based violence, which was more likely to affect younger women. Failure to reverse that trend would drive more women towards self-censorship and out of public spaces. Those immense gendered impacts needed to be addressed, with men and boys brought into the fold to become agents of positive change. Despite collective agreements on gender equality and human rights, polarization and division were growing.

14. Women's rights and equality, including access to sexual and reproductive health services, continued to sit at the heart of his Government's foreign and international development policy. Comprehensive sexuality education was critical for women and girls to be aware of and understand their rights. They must also have control over and freely decide on matters relating to their sexuality and bodily autonomy. Truly leaving no one behind entailed principles of non-discrimination and equality for all, including men, women and people identifying as neither.

15. **Ms. Arega** (Ethiopia) said that more than 85 per cent of women and girls in her country resided in rural areas, where households engaged primarily in subsistence farming. Rural women performed at least half of the labour required for agricultural production but lacked recognition. To expand benefits for and the participation of women and girls, her Government had allocated two thirds of the total budget to vital sectors such as agriculture, education, health, clean water, energy and food security, with a strong focus on poverty alleviation. A community-based health insurance scheme ensured access to health care, providing subsidies for the vulnerable population. The proportion of women with access to credit for income-generating pursuits had stood at 35 per cent in 2020/21 as a result of efforts to expand women's access to finance.

16. In Ethiopia, young girls constrained by limited educational opportunities and by expectations to provide for their families often embarked on a dangerous journey through informal channels in pursuit of a better life. Her Government was tackling the push factors of poverty, low literacy and unemployment by promoting local employment opportunities, access to vocational training and support for small and medium-sized enterprises. The Government had also made

significant strides in combating trafficking in persons and smuggling through a national partnership coalition and a comprehensive migrant database management system.

17. Ethiopia remained committed to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls through a zero-tolerance policy and reinforced legal, institutional and policy frameworks. Efforts extended beyond punitive measures and were aimed at preventing harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation. Her Government would continue to advocate the advancement of women through meaningful national actions and global cooperation.

18. **Ms. Ahangari** (Azerbaijan) said that her Government was committed to the effective achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 5 by raising awareness of women's rights, strengthening measures to combat gender-based violence and boosting women's employment. Gender-responsive policies had helped to eliminate discriminatory laws, and special attention was paid to the economic and social activities of rural women. The number of women appointed to key government positions had increased, and a national action plan was in place to combat domestic violence and provide early identification and effective protection measures for victims.

19. Over the past three decades women and girls in Azerbaijan had experienced first-hand the devastating effects of occupation. Over 300,000 people, half of whom were women, had been expelled from their homes. Thousands of women and girls had been killed by Armenia. The conflict had led to missing Azerbaijani citizens, of whom 267 were women. It had been established that 98 of those women had been taken as hostages by Armenia. Through annual resolutions of the General Assembly and the Commission on the Status of Women, Azerbaijan continued to raise awareness of missing persons and women and children taken as hostages. Armenia should shed light on their fate and bring those responsible to justice.

20. The Armenian delegation had abused the general discussion to repeat unfounded allegations against Azerbaijan. The military attacks alluded to by the Armenian delegation had been counter-terrorism measures taken by Azerbaijan on its sovereign soil in response to the illegally deployed Armenian armed forces. Limited in duration, those measures had targeted military objects exclusively. The Prime Minister of Armenia had even publicly admitted that rumours regarding mass civilian casualties were not true and that there was no direct threat to the civilian population in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

21. Armenian residents in the region had departed of their own will following repeated invitations by Azerbaijan to remain and become a part of a multi-ethnic Azerbaijan. Her Government had a plan in place to reintegrate them as equal citizens, having mobilized resources to address civilians' humanitarian needs. Claims by Armenia of ethnic cleansing were wholly baseless. Numerous local residents had confirmed that they had not been forced to leave and had not been subjected to any inappropriate treatment by the Azerbaijani State structures. Following a visit to the region, representatives from United Nations agencies had found no reports of violence against civilians and had seen no damage to civilian infrastructure.

22. In view of the historic opportunity to establish friendly relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia following 30 years of conflict, the Armenian delegation should use the Committee for more practical and constructive discussions.

23. **Mr. Rai** (Papua New Guinea) said that fostering the advancement of women and girls remained a core priority for his country, and progress continued to be made through actions aligned with its international commitments and obligations. Supported by the European Union and the United Nations, a bipartisan parliamentary committee was leading a whole-of-society, multi-stakeholder approach to combat gender-based violence.

24. Under the national education plan for the period 2020–2029, measures had been taken to break down barriers to girls' access to education, particularly through free schooling, with an emphasis on boosting girls' enrolment and retention. The national health plan for the period 2021–2030 was aimed at strengthening family health programmes at all levels.

25. With a view to increasing women's participation in and ownership of small and medium-sized enterprises, his Government was seeking to register 500,000 such enterprises by 2030 while empowering women to become drivers of national economic growth and achieve their full potential. Microcredit programmes were also in place to support women in the informal and formal sectors. The national information and communications technology authority had launched a scholarship programme that had thus far provided scholarships to over 20 beneficiaries, including 4 successful graduates in 2023. His country was grateful to its development partners for their support in advancing women and girls and their human rights.

26. **Ms. Rodrigues-Birkett** (Guyana) said that deeply concerning projections for the world's female population had been made in reports of the Secretary-

General and UN-Women. Education and capacity-building would yield positive results and needed to be complemented by high-quality health services, social protection and justice systems, and by gender mainstreaming in policies, programmes and budgets.

27. Guyana was pursuing a multifaceted approach to achieve gender equality. Increasing numbers of girls were attending schools and completing tertiary education, with the majority of government-funded scholarships obtained by women and girls. Efforts were being made to improve access for women and girls to free public health services to ensure that those living in rural and hinterland regions were not left behind. Through a low-carbon development strategy, women were being brought into key economic sectors and trained in climate-smart agriculture and business development. Several programmes were dedicated to women's upskilling. Her Government had also implemented programmes to eliminate sexual harassment and violence, with a focus on public awareness, community engagement, hotlines, support for survivors and engagement with men and boys. As a result, more women and girls were using support systems and filing reports.

28. Women and girls faced particularly difficult situations in conflict zones, such as Afghanistan. Guyana welcomed the adoption of Security Council resolution [2699 \(2023\)](#), in which the Council had authorized the deployment of the Multinational Security Support Mission to Haiti, and hoped that it would lead to improved conditions for the people of Haiti, including women and girls.

29. **Ms. González** (Uruguay) said that words needed to be matched by actions to remedy gender inequality. One of first steps was to recognize and study the problem. To that end, her Government had enacted a pioneering law against gender-based violence, under which an observatory on gender-based violence had been established. States needed to take affirmative action to enhance women's access to the benefits of the digital revolution. Uruguay was working to guarantee equal access for girls, adolescents and women to science, technology, engineering and mathematics from an early age, with a view to fostering gender equality and women's autonomy, while also protecting them against online violence.

30. In its United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, Uruguay had set four strategic priorities, one of which was to create a society that fostered development and upheld the rights of people without leaving anyone behind. The direct effect would be that institutions, actors and stakeholders in the

country would make progress in eliminating gender gaps and effecting sociocultural change to expand women's participation in decision-making and eradicate gender-based violence by 2025.

31. Given the cross-cutting nature of gender, her Government based its approach to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 5 on linking gender with other Goals, such as reducing inequality, ensuring quality education, ending poverty and promoting decent work and economic growth. Uruguay counted on the steadfast support of United Nations agencies and other partners to be able to meet the Goals.

32. **Mr. Moriko** (Côte d'Ivoire) said that advancing gender equality was a sine qua non condition of sustainable development. His Government had joined international conventions and passed legislation to support gender equality and women's equality. Given the wide-ranging forms of discrimination, violence and abuse faced by women, the Government had undertaken reforms with a view to eliminating the concept of an exclusively male head of household, stipulating a quota of 30 per cent for women in elected bodies, establishing equal pay and employment, promoting access to certain positions formerly reserved for men, providing legal and judicial assistance for women victims of domestic violence, defining a national strategy to combat gender-based violence and expanding the number of women in senior management positions.

33. Advancing the rights of women should go hand in hand with eradicating ignorance and poverty. Schooling for all and programmes to support literacy, including projects for women's professional training, were aimed at addressing those root causes. Funds had been set up to combat poverty and were available for women's professional development and entrepreneurial support. His Government had provided training in finance and corporate management and leadership. Through the Sahel Women Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project, support would be provided to 15,000 young girls, who would also benefit from a literacy programme under the Government's social programme.

34. **Mr. Tun** (Myanmar) said that, although many countries were making strides towards women's rights and gender equality, those struggling with conflict were unable to secure even the most basic rights for women and girls. From 2016 to 2020, the elected civilian Government of Myanmar had made progress on the advancement of women and girls, but that progress had been reversed by the illegal military coup and junta. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, some 4,141 people had been arbitrarily killed by the military junta, including more than 613 women.

35. Women and girls stood at the front line of opposition to the illegal coup, leading demonstrations, documenting atrocities and informing the international community. According to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, the military junta's violence and atrocities could amount to crimes against humanity and war crimes. The military had committed egregious acts of sexual violence against women. The National Unity Government and its partners were working hard to protect women and girls and promote their rights, assisting victims of sexual violence as necessary. Countries in the region should protect the women and girls who had escaped from such atrocities.

36. The military dictatorship needed to end, and power should be returned to an elected civilian Government to alleviate the suffering of women and girls. The international community and Member States should extend effective support to Myanmar, especially its women and girls.

37. **Ms. Luque Nuñez** (Panama) said that, to combat violence against women, States must address the principal forms of discrimination that prevented them from fully exercising their rights. Cross-sector coordination was essential, because violence against women also affected their families, friends and society as a whole. Panama remained committed to gender equality and women's empowerment, which were essential for both sustainable development and lasting peace. If elected to the Security Council for the period 2025–2026, her country would steadfastly champion the rights of women and girls and the work of UN-Women as integral to the maintenance of international peace and security.

38. Her Government had recently taken a number of steps to promote gender equality that would have a positive impact on both economic empowerment and bodily autonomy. They included establishing a ministry of women and adopting national plans for the economic empowerment of Indigenous women and for the promotion of gender equality in science, technology and innovation and in the development of conservation actions. Panama had also made significant progress in implementing the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It remained committed to the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action as the road map for achieving gender equality and respect for the human rights of women and girls.

39. **Ms. Kamiya** (Japan) said that the accusations levied against Japan by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the 9th meeting of the Committee (see [A/C.3/78/SR.9](#)) were erroneous, groundless and unacceptable. After the

Second World War, Japan had humbly faced its own past, and it had contributed to peace and prosperity in the region and the world for 75 years.

40. Every year, the Government of Japan adopted a basic policy on gender equality and empowerment. Numerical targets were established, and funds were allocated to each ministry. In 2023, the Government had set targets for the percentage of women executives, strengthened measures on spousal violence and enacted a law to address intersectional issues such as poverty and sexual violence. It was also promoting the utilization of "femtech" and encouraging the use of the long-standing menstrual leave system.

41. At the global level, Japan had contributed more than \$20 million to UN-Women and continued to provide financial support to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. During the 2023 Summit of the Group of Seven Industrialized Countries, hosted by Japan, the member countries had reaffirmed their commitment to increase their share of official development assistance for the promotion of gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment over the following five years.

42. **Mr. Voionmaa** (Finland) said that eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and girls in all their diversity was a national priority. The Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved unless the rights of women and girls were fulfilled. That would require systematic targets on gender equality, strong leadership, gender-transformative policies and a commitment to the founding principles of the United Nations. Legislation and policies must guarantee the sexual and reproductive health rights of all women and girls, including those with disabilities. In addition, comprehensive sexuality education was essential to ensure that persons of all genders knew their rights and could set healthy boundaries in relationships.

43. As a member of the Action Coalition on Technology and Innovation for Gender Equality, Finland championed work to bridge digital gender gaps. Digitalization could accelerate progress towards Goal 5, but it could also impede it unless steps were taken to prevent and eliminate digitally facilitated gender-based violence. Preventing sexual and gender-based violence in all its forms was critical, and victims, including persons with disabilities and persons living in fragile contexts, must have access to appropriate services. The right of women and girls with disabilities to live without discrimination, stigma or violence should be upheld.

44. **Mr. Milambo** (Zambia) said that his delegation joined in calling for a different approach to the

advancement of women and for accelerated efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5 and implement the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. Successive and overlapping crises had disproportionately affected women and girls, slowing progress towards Goal 5. To recover momentum, his Government had implemented a variety of social programmes to reduce poverty and inequalities among the vulnerable, particularly women and girls in rural areas.

45. Zambia was also endeavouring to change customary land tenure practices to give women equal access. To address gender-based violence, it was implementing a range of programmes, with a focus on fast-track courts, one-stop centres and shelters. To ensure women's and girls' access to tertiary education, a percentage of loans and bursaries was earmarked specifically for them.

46. **Mr. Faiq** (Afghanistan) said that, since the Taliban takeover in 2021, the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan had been consistently abused and violated. The Taliban had dissolved the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Afghanistan Human Rights Commission, and had issued more than 50 decrees that effectively created gender apartheid. Women were held to a strict dress code, barred from secondary school and university, forbidden to travel without a male chaperone and prohibited from working in beauty salons. Nevertheless, Afghan women continued to speak out, even though they and their relatives risked beating, arrest and unlawful detention.

47. The abolishment of institutions and laws that protected women and girls had created a legal void, leading to a rise in domestic violence and forced marriages. Women who reported domestic violence were often punished. In December 2022, the Taliban had prohibited women from working with non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. That and other work-related restrictions severely affected women's economic circumstances, especially when they were the sole providers.

48. States must stand with Afghan women and girls, amplify their voices and work tirelessly to restore their rights and dignity through targeted sanctions, principled engagement and efforts to codify and recognize gender apartheid. By exerting united pressure, they could convince the Taliban to reverse its policies.

49. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that stronger multilateral action was needed to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 5. Women and girls should be front and centre in the Summit of the Future, to be held in

2024. Andorra was concerned at the rollback of women's rights around the world, the persistence of gender-based violence, the increase in sexual violence and femicide, the multiple forms of discrimination against women and women's precarious employment, impoverishment, unequal wages and unequal access to education.

50. A 2022 law on equal treatment and opportunities for men and women had provided for the establishment of a national women's institute in Andorra. The institute would advise the national legislature, the Government, local authorities and public institutions on gender mainstreaming and would assist businesses in the development of gender equality plans. It would also monitor compliance with treaty obligations relating to gender equality. In secondary schools, measures had been taken to boost the number of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, to raise awareness of gender stereotypes and to institute the teaching of non-sexist language. Her Government was continuing to strengthen mechanisms for countering violence against women and girls, as well as to address structural causes and provide support for victims. Andorra made women and girls a priority in all its international development assistance programmes, and provided regular support to UN-Women.

51. **Mr. Lippwe** (Federated States of Micronesia) said that, as a small country with limited human resources, the Federated States of Micronesia was committed to providing equal opportunities for all citizens. When implementing projects to expand Internet access, his Government had taken steps to make Internet service affordable for low-income, women-headed households. The new digital infrastructure enabled telehealth consultations, which expanded women's and girls' access to health care. Uninsured women and girls were eligible for an insurance waiver, and local dispensaries provided medical care for victims of rape and domestic abuse. In addition, a large number of government-funded scholarships had been established to support women's and girls' access to non-traditional fields such as information and communications technology.

52. Women in his country held key positions in the judiciary and had finally entered legislative office at the national level. His Government was committed to placing more women in decision-making positions. In the Federated States of Micronesia, as in all small island developing States, women, children and persons with disabilities were often the first affected by climate change.

53. **Ms. Pongar** (Hungary) said that the equal rights of women were enshrined in the Hungarian

Constitution. Her Government was pursuing robust, well-funded policies to support families, protect women from violence and support women's participation in all aspects of life. Its family policies were aimed at ensuring women's financial stability, providing housing support and helping women to achieve work-life balance. Thanks to those policies, there were more women working and fewer women unemployed, and the fertility rate had increased.

54. To boost the number of women in public decision-making positions, a free women's public leadership programme had been instituted in 2018. With respect to violence against women, her Government was taking decisive action to combat violent crime and provided safe houses and comprehensive support services for survivors.

55. **Mr. Nene** (Lesotho) said that his Government continued to intensify its efforts to provide an enabling environment for all, including women and girls. Stronger action was needed to combat gender-based violence, maternal mortality, adolescent pregnancy and HIV infection among women, which were all too prevalent. To address the health issues, his Government was redoubling efforts to deploy village health workers to remote areas and was investing in the distribution of condoms to prevent adolescent pregnancies and HIV infection.

56. To empower women economically, his Government was working to increase the economic presence of women entrepreneurs through affirmative public procurement policies supporting women's participation in local industries and through a pilot empowerment programme conducted jointly with the United Nations Development Programme. In addition, Lesotho had enacted legislation giving women access to land ownership. However, to protect the rights of citizens, particularly vulnerable groups, countries such as his needed assistance from the international community to strengthen their governance institutions.

57. **Monsignor Murphy** (Observer for the Holy See) said that, in many countries, women were still considered second-class citizens, subjected to violence and abuse, and denied opportunities to develop their potential. It was essential to root out practices that treated women as objects to be acquired, exploited and cast aside at will. The majority of detected victims of trafficking in persons were women, and women were also more likely to experience violence at the hands of their traffickers. Poverty, lack of education and family instability put women and girls at greater risk of being trafficked and must be tackled. It was also necessary to make trafficking more difficult and less profitable, to

identify the victims and to prosecute traffickers and smugglers.

58. The vast majority of sexual trafficking victims were women, and a significant proportion of those victims were forced to make pornography. Even women who voluntarily chose to make pornography experienced violence, coercion and drug addiction. Any form of pornography objectified and belittled women, and toleration of its creation and consumption was incompatible with respect for the dignity of women.

59. Respect for women included valuing motherhood, which was too often seen as a liability. The promotion of abortion and the narrow focus on reducing maternal mortality through pregnancy prevention, without making childbirth safer, were both evidence of the devaluation of motherhood. Prenatal sex selection was an affront to the dignity of women, and women and their children should not be commodified through assisted reproductive technologies such as egg donation and surrogacy.

60. **Ms. Diouf** (Senegal) said that economic and social gender equality remained a distant goal, particularly in Africa. Government action had been absent or ineffective, owing in part to underinvestment, and the effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic and political crises had largely erased decades of progress.

61. The development vision of Senegal emphasized women's social and economic empowerment. Over the past decade, gender units had been established within all government ministries to ensure that women's issues were systematically mainstreamed in all policies and programmes. Her Government had criminalized rape and paedophilia and was implementing a national strategy for the economic empowerment of women. Thanks to a gender parity law, almost half of Senegalese legislators were women.

62. Member States must continue to make gender equality and women's empowerment a central priority. They must promote respect for women's human rights, women's full and effective participation in peace processes and their access to social and economic services. There must be zero tolerance for the sexual exploitation and abuse of women or for any discrimination against them.

63. *Ms. Monica (Bangladesh), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

64. **Ms. Gebrekidan** (Eritrea) said that it was crucial to recognize that the history of patriarchy was intricately intertwined with that of racism, imperialism and colonialism. Effectively addressing gender inequality

therefore necessitated conscious understanding of the interconnected history.

65. Eritrea maintained a progressive stance on the advancement of women's rights, having made gender equality an integral part of its nation-building efforts. The country's unwavering commitment to dismantling negative traditions and harmful practices during its tumultuous struggle for independence underscored the notion that addressing women's equality was not only a legitimate concern, but also one that should take precedence in all circumstances. However, it was important to acknowledge and collectively address the challenges States faced in that regard. For example, unequal economic and political structures contributed to poverty, which exacerbated gender inequality. Women faced economic vulnerability in States at varying stages of development, and developing countries were often forced to deprioritize gender equality amid competing concerns.

66. A further challenge requiring action was the impact of sanctions and unilateral coercive measures on gender equality. The imposition of sanctions impeded States' development, with women and vulnerable groups facing difficulties such as lack of access to clean water, job insecurity and an increased risk of exploitation during economic downturns. A genuine endeavour to meet the Sustainable Development Goals and achieve gender equality therefore required revision of that harmful policy, which was advanced by a small group of countries in violation of international law.

67. **Mr. Nunes** (Timor-Leste) said that violence against women and girls was one of the most widespread, relentless and distressing human rights violations and a major obstacle to women's rights and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. There was a growing awareness of and commitment to addressing that issue in Timor-Leste, and successive Governments had introduced legislation, policies and programmes to address its underlying causes.

68. National structures had been established to promote gender equality and gender mainstreaming, and to monitor the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His Government had approved a national action plan on gender-based violence, focused on prevention, the provision of services for survivors, improved access to justice and increased coordination, monitoring and evaluation.

69. The representation of women in decision-making roles was increasing at all levels and in all forums in Timor-Leste. In the recent parliamentary election, 48.64

per cent of voters and 36.92 per cent of the parliamentarians elected had been women. Timor-Leste therefore currently had one of the highest rates of female representation in parliament in the Asia-Pacific region.

70. His Government had introduced a variety of measures to address women's economic and social rights, equal access to and control over economic resources, and equality in employment. Small grants were being provided to women through the women's economic empowerment strategy, and rural women were empowered through the implementation of the Declaration of Maubisse.

71. *Mr. Marschik (Austria) resumed the Chair.*

72. **Mr. Aydil** (Türkiye) said that his country remained firmly committed to enhancing the rights of women and girls, ensuring their full and equal participation in all spheres of life and strengthening their status in society. His Government had therefore recently introduced legislative reforms and improved administrative practices to further enhance the legal foundation for women's human rights.

73. Türkiye was committed to combating the scourge of violence against women and girls, which had a devastating impact on their physical and mental health, and on the social and economic fabric of society. There was a law in place to protect the family and prevent domestic violence against women, as well as national action plans that reflected the fundamental principle of zero tolerance for gender-based violence, with the aim of improving access to justice, enhancing preventive measures and raising public awareness. Violence prevention and monitoring centres had been strengthened to provide women with medical and legal assistance, counselling, and financial and employment support. Furthermore, judicial support services had been established to provide legal aid to victims, raise awareness of their rights and provide psychosocial support during judicial processes.

74. Empowering women and ensuring their full and equal participation in all spheres of life were catalysts for sustainable peace and development. Moreover, the active participation and meaningful representation of women in politics were fundamental to democracy. His delegation was proud to note that 121 women were currently serving in the Turkish parliament, and that 60 per cent of teachers, over 50 per cent of academics, 47 per cent of lawyers and architects, 45 per cent of doctors and 40 per cent of civil servants were women. Türkiye would continue to support the UN-Women regional office in Istanbul and the Group of Friends for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Girls,

which served as a useful cross-regional platform for the sharing of best practices and innovative ideas.

75. **Ms. Célestin** (Haiti) said that the international community had major challenges to overcome in order to address the worrying gaps and persistent inequalities caused by gender-related disparities in the educational, economic, political, health, security and climate spheres. Immense effort would be required, especially given that developing countries such as Haiti, despite ample human and natural resources, were often held back by a lack of means, climate change, natural disasters and crises of various kinds.

76. Haitian mothers continued to fight for their children's education, making ends meet through informal commerce and often lacking social security coverage and access to health care, which should be universal. Her Government was supplementing those valiant efforts through stand-alone initiatives, structural programmes and sustainable policies to help women to achieve their full potential. By applying the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, it was seeking to make gender equality a reality in everyday life through gender-responsive budgeting and to help more women to obtain positions of power. A law on domestic violence had been adopted in 2003, and care in old age was a priority for the Administration in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era.

77. However, none of those efforts guaranteed that the Sustainable Development Goals would be achieved, especially with emerging challenges such as the digital divide impeding progress. Such phenomena could be overcome through solidarity, regional and international cooperation to support national projects, the sharing of training expertise and the allocation of funding to address digital illiteracy. If communications companies were to commit to transferring technology and using it to empower women and girls around the world, that would be a source of hope.

78. **Ms. Rizk** (Egypt) said that the noticeable reversal of progress on women's rights had many causes, including the diversion of international attention towards serious crises. Her delegation nevertheless warned against ignoring women's issues, as international cooperation and exchange was critical.

79. Some at the United Nations and elsewhere had attempted to exploit the women's empowerment agenda by including other groups that were not the subject of international consensus. That was detrimental to women because it diverted attention from obstacles to women's advancement such as poverty, food insecurity, foreign occupation and climate change. Cultural values must not be imposed on other States in violation of their

sovereignty and their freedom to choose their own value systems.

80. In 2017, Egypt had launched a strategy to empower Egyptian women, in line with its Vision 2030 on the implementation of a sustainable development agenda. The strategy was aimed at political, economic and social empowerment, social protection, awareness-raising and the development of a legislative framework, and was complemented by other strategies to combat violence against women, female genital mutilation and early marriage. The strategy took into consideration the intersecting political, economic and cultural roles played by women in Egyptian society, with a focus on the family as the main unit of society.

81. Rural women played an important role in the agricultural and food production sectors and provided essential care for children and older persons in their families and communities. The Decent Life initiative had been introduced to improve quality of life in rural areas and to foster the economic empowerment of rural women. Her Government had also introduced 100 Million Healthy Lives, a programme to monitor non-communicable diseases. On the basis of the data collected, a subsequent campaign had been launched for the early detection of diseases that affected women specifically. Her Government had also launched a project to support Egyptian families by providing health and reproductive care, thereby facilitating family planning and improving quality of life.

82. **Mr. Al Rubkhi** (Oman) said that his country placed individuals at the centre of development efforts. Under the Oman Vision 2040 initiative, whose ultimate goal was to achieve prosperity and social justice for all groups in society, his Government had made progress towards the advancement of women. Women in Oman were diplomats, ambassadors and Ministers and held senior positions in the judiciary, the parliament and the Shura Council.

83. Omani legislation and national plans were aligned with international instruments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. His Government had established a national committee, with members from the Oman Human Rights Commission, women's organizations and civil society institutions, to follow up on the implementation of the Convention. Oman had put forward its candidature for the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women for the term 2025–2028.

84. Girls comprised over 76 per cent of all students enrolled for the 2022/23 academic year in Oman, and high numbers of girls were also enrolled in study abroad

programmes. Women accounted for 88 per cent of all artisans and 41 per cent of public sector employees. Women were the recipients of 47 per cent of State land grants.

85. **Ms. Dabo N'diaye** (Mali) said that, in view of the importance of women for socioeconomic development, her Government had taken steps to advance their social, economic and legal status, and had established a specific ministry to address women's issues. Mali was a signatory to a number of legal instruments to promote and protect women's rights, including those designed to eliminate gender-based discrimination in line with the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The Government had also sought to end discriminatory sociocultural practices.

86. With respect to Sustainable Development Goal 5 and the Agenda 2063 of the African Union, her Government had strengthened the constitutional framework through complementary policies and programmes and had introduced gender-responsive budget-planning practices. State resources allocated to women's empowerment were increased every year in support of women's services, development, entrepreneurship and leadership. The Government was working to ensure that as many women and girls as possible had access to high-quality education. The attainment gap between boys and girls had narrowed as a result of the national schooling policy and the support offered by her country's development partners. Measures had been adopted to provide women and girls with access to the health care they needed, including at the community level. Given their preponderance in the Malian economy, women working in the informal and rural sectors benefited from targeted programmes, providing them with access to economic resources, means of production and loans for income-generating activities, as well as managerial training, on an equal footing with men.

87. For a country in crisis such as Mali, having women participate in peace processes was a genuine demonstration of their independence. Women's participation in economic, political and public life had also improved. Women occupied around 30 per cent of seats on the national transition council, as well as key posts in ministries such as health care, mines and entrepreneurship. In the private sector, women were working in business and benefiting from equal pay and job opportunities.

88. **Ms. Lucii** (Observer for the Sovereign Order of Malta) said that countless people around the world experienced violence or lived in marginalized communities without access to medical care or basic

sanitation. Sadly, it was often women who fell victim to violence or were left behind. The Sovereign Order of Malta had partnered with the non-profit Global Strategic Operatives to host an event on trafficking in persons in September 2022. Supported by the World Health Organization, the initiative had represented a significant step forward in combating that practice. However, truly protecting women meant not only focusing on their safety but also meeting their basic needs, especially in rural and marginalized communities.

89. The Order was actively engaged in efforts to improve the lives of women and girls in communities around the world. A medical centre in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, for example, provided much-needed health care to women, children and leprosy patients. In Togo, neonatal care was offered to over 3,000 children and 1,200 pregnant women annually through a dedicated hospital, while a medical centre in Burkina Faso offered maternal and neonatal services benefiting 28,000 people in underserved areas. In Chile, the Order had reached 5,000 people in isolated rural communities, providing essential medical care and school supplies to those who would otherwise not have access to them.

90. **Ms. Ngirwa-Mpesha** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that women and girls living in rural areas accounted for over a quarter of the global population and represented a major source of future economic and social development. Nevertheless, they continued to face poverty, hunger, malnutrition and gender-based discrimination, as highlighted in a recent report by her organization entitled *The Status of Women in Agrifood Systems*.

91. Globally, 36 per cent of working women and 38 per cent of working men were employed in agrifood systems, but women were more likely to work in marginalized, informal, part-time, low-skilled or labour-intensive jobs. Women also had less secure tenure of land, limited access to credit and training, and less decision-making authority. As a result, a farm managed by a woman was, on average, 24 per cent less productive than a farm of the same size managed by a man.

92. The report showed that gender equality and female empowerment reduced hunger, boosted the economy and improved resilience to shocks such as climate change. Closing the gender gap in farm productivity and agricultural wages would increase global gross domestic product by \$1 trillion and lift 45 million people out of food insecurity. To that end, it was important to assess the differing impacts of policies and programmes on men and women by collecting and assessing high-quality gender data. Women needed to be able to buy,

sell and inherit land, open bank accounts, borrow money, sign contracts and receive social security benefits. Women and girls must be guaranteed equal access to education and information, and public services and technology should be used to free them from the drudgery of tasks such as carrying water or fetching firewood. Lastly, more should be done to address harmful gender norms, and to distribute power, resources and services more equitably.

Statements made in exercise of the right of reply

93. **Ms. Azad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that her country strongly condemned and categorically rejected the baseless and unfounded allegation made by the representative of the United States of America against her Government at the previous meeting (see [A/C.3/78/SR.9](#)). The United States should stop meddling in the internal affairs of independent Member States under the guise of advocating for human rights and stop exploiting the Committee's platform of politicized human rights issues for its narrow political agenda. As the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi, had recently asked, could the United States, which was the biggest prison for mothers in the world, honestly worry about women's rights?

94. If the United States remembered the anniversary of the tragic death of Mahsa Amini, it should also remember the other Iranian women, girls and children who had died as a result of the economic war imposed by the United States. The drug embargo imposed by the United States had led to the deaths of innocent children and Iranians with rare diseases, among others. The United States should focus on addressing human rights issues within its own borders.

95. The Islamic Republic of Iran respected human rights and dignity, in particular for women and girls. It encouraged all Member States to uphold the principle of mature, respectful dialogue on human rights issues and to avoid double standards when addressing them.

96. **Mr. Hakobyan** (Armenia) said that his delegation condemned yet another attempt by Azerbaijan to justify the use of force. Citing counter-terrorism as a pretext for the use of force not only violated international law and fundamental human rights but also undermined the very principles of justice, peace and security that counter-terrorism efforts were meant to uphold.

97. The aggression of Azerbaijan on 19 September 2023 had brought a new wave of violence and anguish to the South Caucasus region, resulting in hundreds of casualties, including women and children. In the aftermath, more than 100,000 people had been displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh and taken refuge in Armenia.

98. After a 10-month blockade, after full-scale aggression with indiscriminate shelling and the encirclement of civilian settlements, after terrorizing the people of Nagorno-Karabakh for years, after using hate speech and inciting violence against Armenians for decades, and after eventually forcibly dispossessing them of their ancestral homeland, Azerbaijan still had the nerve to declare that the people of Nagorno-Karabakh had left of their own accord. That was the pinnacle of the Azerbaijani policy of ethnic cleansing against the Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

99. For months, Armenia had appealed to the United Nations, its respective bodies and relevant international actors to fulfil their duty to protect and to dispatch a humanitarian assessment mission to Nagorno-Karabakh. Azerbaijan had blocked that mission in an effort to conceal its policy of ethnic cleansing. While acknowledging the importance of the United Nations having access to Nagorno-Karabakh, his delegation regretted the fact that access had been granted only after the full exodus of the Indigenous Armenians of the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

100. Hundreds of Armenians had been classed as missing since the war in the 1990s, and hundreds more were still missing in the wake of the aggression of Azerbaijan in 2020. Moreover, Azerbaijan had held dozens of Armenian prisoners of war hostage in the intervening three years.

101. Armenia had always sought a diplomatic and peaceful solution to the conflict, as required by the Charter of the United Nations and international law. It continued to negotiate in good faith in multiple forums to find mutually acceptable solutions to outstanding issues. Azerbaijan, on the other hand, had resorted to ultimatums, blockades, starvation, constant military escalation and the terrorization of the Armenian population of the Nagorno-Karabakh region, with the ultimate goal of the ethnic cleansing of Nagorno-Karabakh.

102. **Ms. Ahangari** (Azerbaijan) said that, when the conflict had ended in 2020, despite the mass atrocities endured by Azerbaijani people over the previous 30 years, it had been Azerbaijan that had extended the hand of peace. Her country had initiated the process of normalizing relations with Armenia, on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and the inviolability of each other's borders. In the three years that had followed, Armenia had kept heavily armed military forces – specifically, armed formations of around 10,000 soldiers – in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan,

including by abusing the Lachin corridor, in an attempt to foster separatism.

103. The events described by the Armenian delegation as an attack on the civilian population had been local counter-terrorism measures taken by Azerbaijan on its sovereign soil in response to systematic provocations by the Armenian armed forces, which had been illegally deployed on Azerbaijani territory. Those measures had been taken in accordance with the sovereign right of Azerbaijan to self-defence enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Azerbaijan had acted in full compliance with the norms of humanitarian law, and measures had been taken to avoid collateral damage to civilians or civilian infrastructure.

104. In relation to the number of people killed or wounded, the Armenian delegation had omitted the fact that the figures quoted related to Armenian military personnel, not civilians. With respect to the alleged blockade, Armenia was using the language of humanitarianism to conduct a smear campaign against Azerbaijan for the sole purpose of derailing the normalization process. That campaign had collapsed on 18 September 2023, in view of the eventual implementation of her country's offer of using multiple routes to deliver goods to meet the needs of ethnic Armenians living in the Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

105. Azerbaijan rejected all allegations of deportation and ethnic cleansing. Her Government had clearly and unambiguously confirmed its commitment to creating the appropriate conditions for the Armenian residents of the region to stay in Azerbaijan as part of the country's multi-ethnic community. Armenia, on the contrary, was systematically persuading local residents to move. The Armenian Government was seeking to impose its annexationist, separatist stance on the international community by arguing that no Armenian could live under the jurisdiction of Azerbaijan. The anti-Azerbaijani propaganda on the part of the Armenian State had led to deep-rooted hatred and mistrust. Such artificially nurtured hatred and fear of Azerbaijanis was the main reason for the decision of many local residents to leave for Armenia, although many of those who had left had already expressed a desire to return to live as Azerbaijani citizens. The Government of Azerbaijan was engaged in consistent and systematic efforts to facilitate their voluntary return.

106. Azerbaijan was a country in which dozens of ethnic, religious and linguistic groups lived side by side and enjoyed their rights under applicable international law. Ethnic Armenians living in the Karabakh region were welcome to be part of that multicultural model.

107. **Mr. Hakobyan** (Armenia) said that Armenia maintained no armed forces in Nagorno-Karabakh, as it had reiterated on many occasions, including during discussions at the United Nations.

108. In two orders issued in February and July 2023, the International Court of Justice had, at the request of Armenia, asked Azerbaijan to take steps to allow people and vehicles to pass along the Lachin corridor in both directions. Azerbaijan had done nothing to comply with those orders.

109. With respect to guaranteeing the rights of Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh, the human rights record of Azerbaijan was well known. The most recent arbitrary arrests of former Nagorno-Karabakh officials, the prevalence of anti-Armenian hate speech in Azerbaijan and the many previous instances of ethnic and religious violence demonstrated that such guarantees were simply untrue. Armenian refugees who had left Nagorno-Karabakh had the right to return, and the choice would be theirs.

110. **Ms. Ahangari** (Azerbaijan) said that 19 military outposts, 20 combat vehicles, 40 pieces of artillery, 30 mortars, 60 warfare systems and 2 anti-aircraft missile systems had been neutralized in one 24-hour period as part of counter-terrorism measures. The military equipment and offensive weaponry described exposed the extent of the illegal militarization in the region, which had surpassed even her country's initial assessment.

111. The illicit transfer and storage of weapons and ammunition in the territory of Azerbaijan demonstrated the blatant violation by Armenia of the relevant arms and export control regimes. Under existing regimes, only States could acquire neutralized and confiscated weaponry. The stubborn denial by Armenia of its military presence in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan was therefore nothing short of sheer deception of the international community. The findings also reaffirmed the illegal presence of Armenian armed forces in the sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, and the continued militarization of the area through illegal transfers of weapons and munitions from Armenia in the aftermath of the hostilities.

112. The representative of Armenia had blatantly misinterpreted the decisions of the International Court of Justice. In its order of 22 February 2023, the Court had declined to issue a measure in the form requested by Armenia and had rejected most of its other requests. Armenia had subsequently requested a court order requiring Azerbaijan to remove the border checkpoint that it had established at the entrance to the Lachin road. That request had also been rejected.

113. Regarding detainees, arrests had been made as part of a criminal investigation conducted in accordance with the procedures of the Azerbaijani criminal court. The individuals in question were accused of involvement in aggression against Azerbaijan, incitement of terrorist attacks, crimes against peace and humanity, war crimes and other grave crimes against prisoners of war and civilians.

114. The fact that thousands of Armenian servicemen and members of illegal armed formations who had agreed to disarm had been released by Azerbaijan as a humanitarian gesture, and had travelled to Armenia without obstruction, demonstrated her country's humanitarian approach.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.